



## **COLAs Online — eApplication Process**

**To: Distilled Spirits Plants, Breweries, Wineries, Taxpaid Wine Bottling Houses, Importers, and Others Concerned with the Alcohol Beverage Industry**

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

#### ***What is the purpose of this circular?***

This circular provides information to guide you through the COLAs Online eApplication process for filing Certificates of Label Approval (COLAs) using the Internet.

#### ***What is COLAs Online?***

COLAs Online, an Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) electronic-government initiative, is a streamlined, expedient, paperless Internet-based system that:

- Allows an industry member to electronically submit COLA applications to TTB.
- Allows TTB to electronically review and return applications to industry members, whether approved, correctible, or rejected.
- Allows an industry member to obtain online status updates on electronically-filed COLA application forms.
- Allows the public to view COLAs approved electronically, including labels.

### **FILING eAPPLICATIONS USING COLAS ONLINE**

#### ***Helpful Hints To Remember for Successful Use of COLAs Online***

- You must use Internet Explorer 5.0 or higher as your Internet browser with your PC, or Safari 1.0 if you use a Macintosh.
- There is online help built into the COLAs Online application. If you are not sure what is being asked for in a particular field, click on the question mark next to that item. Please call the Advertising Labeling and Formulation Division's (ALFD) Customer Service Team for guidance (1-866-927-2533) if you need further

assistance. Guesses or incorrect information often results in your application being returned to you for correction.

- Please review your application and verify that all the information on your application is accurate. You must click “I Agree” at the bottom of the Verification Page before choosing to “Save” or “Submit” your eApplication.
- The class/type designation (for example: red wine, chardonnay, stout, or vodka) is no longer required in any field on the application.
- Get your printing company or label designer to provide you with label images already in an acceptable electronic format (JPEG or TIFF file type). This will minimize any difficulties with converting label images to JPEG or TIFF files.
- You may not submit labels in PDF format.
- All the information supplied in the application must match the labels submitted with the application and your basic permit/brewer’s notice.
- COLAs Online will time you out after 10 minutes of inactivity. After such time, you are required to again enter your user ID and password in order to regain access to the system. We are working to increase the allowed idle time to 20 minutes in the near future.
- There is no “save” option for incomplete eApplications. You must complete the entire application in one sitting. You may then chose to save the completed application for up to 30 days before submitting it to TTB.

### ***Common Errors on eApplications***

**Appellation of Origin (wine only):** An appellation is the name of a place and it tells the consumer where the grapes used to make the wine were grown. Examples are “New York,” “Napa Valley” and “South East Australia.”

You must show an appellation on a wine label when you show a vintage date or varietal designation (e.g. Pinot Noir). Please see 27 CFR 4.25 for more guidance on using appellations.

DO NOT enter anything in this field if you do not use an appellation on your label and DO NOT enter anything but an appellation in this field. If you are not sure what, if anything, to enter here, please call the ALFD Customer Service Team (1-866-927-2533) for guidance.

**Brand Name:** The brand name is the name under which the product is sold and it is usually the most prominent thing on the label. DO NOT enter the class/type designation (e.g. Chardonnay, Vodka, Ale or red wine) in this field. You are not

required to tell us the class/type designation that appears on your label. Putting this information in the Brand Name (or any other field) will result in your application being returned to you for correction.

**Fanciful Name:** A fanciful name is a name used on your label in addition to your brand name to identify your product to consumers. Not everyone uses a fanciful name in addition to the brand name, and you should only put something in this field if you use a secondary name in conjunction with your brand name.

DO NOT enter the class/type designation (e.g. Merlot, dessert wine, flavored malt beverage, or vodka) in this field. You are not required to tell us the class/type designation that appears on your label. Putting this information in the Fanciful Name (or any other) field will result in your application being returned to you for correction.

**Trade Name:** A trade name (fictitious name, DBA) is a name other than your corporate/owner name. Not everyone uses a trade name on their label, but if you do, type it in exactly as it appears in the bottler's/importer's name on the label. The Trade Name used on the label must be identical to an approved trade name on your basic permit/brewer's notice.

**Formula:** If you have attached a Formula or Statement of Process, be sure to include in this field the Formula number/SOP number that corresponds to the document you uploaded as an attachment.

**Net Content:** If this product is bottled or packed in multiple sizes, each net content size must appear in this field. Please note that after selecting a net content from the drop-down box, you must click on the "Select and Add" link before you can proceed with the application process.

**Dimensions:** When Advertising, Labeling and Formulation Division (ALFD) specialists review eApplications, the product information and the label images submitted are viewed within the printable version of the COLA form. When entering image dimensions, you must take into account any extra space saved within the label image that is not a part of the label itself or the printable COLA seen by specialists will generate a skewed version of the submitted labels.

For example, if a label is 3 by 4 inches when printed and attached to a bottle, but the label image file contains a one-inch border of blank white space, the dimensions entered into COLAs Online should be 4 by 5 inches. Please crop out any space surrounding the label so there is not extra blank space within the saved label image. You can then enter in the exact dimensions of the printed label into COLAs Online.

### ***Guidance for Uploading Label Images***

- We DO NOT accept PDF files for a variety of reasons. PDF image clarity is not sufficient for us to judge contrast and legibility of mandatory label information.
- COLAs Online currently accepts TIFF and JPEG file types.
- Each label must be uploaded as a separate image file, and each image may not exceed 450 KB. Do not submit an attachment that contains more than one label (e.g. a single attachment may not contain front, back and neck labels).
- When designating the brand label, please ensure that it contains all of the mandatory front label information for the respective product type. Each application must contain a brand (front) label.
- After uploading the label images, please preview them to ensure that they are clear and readable.

### ***Converting Image Files***

- If you receive your labels from your printing company in an acceptable format (JPEG or TIFF), the extra steps of converting your image files will be unnecessary.
- If your printing company or label designer cannot provide you with electronic copies of your labels in JPEG or TIFF format, you must convert the label files in order to submit them to us. Set the compression ratio for the file type you do submit to 50% or Medium, whichever your software application option is. This will ensure a clear image in the COLAs Online application.
- When saving a label in either Adobe Acrobat or Photo Shop (the most popular imaging programs), please review the compression methods addressed in the application's help files. Adobe Acrobat users can find compression help by selecting "help," then "index," and then "compression method." Photo Shop users can find compression help by selecting "help," then "index," and then "compression." Other software packages should have similar compression help information.

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Attached below is an updated copy of the Frequently Asked Questions Web page for COLAs Online. These FAQs are accessible on the TTB Web site and are revised often. Please visit <http://www.ttb.gov/alcohol/info/faq/index.htm> - [colasonline](http://www.colasonline.gov) to view the most recent version of these questions and answers.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

If you have any questions or require further assistance, please contact the ALFD Customer Service Team. Our Customer Service Team is available to assist you with labeling and formula issues Monday–Friday (except Federal Holidays), 8:30am–4:30pm Eastern Time.

You can reach our Customer Service Team at (202) 927-8140, toll free at (866) 927-ALFD (2533), by fax at (202) 927-3306, or by e-mail at [alfd@ttb.treas.gov](mailto:alfd@ttb.treas.gov).

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "A. J. Libertucci". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Arthur J. Libertucci  
Administrator  
Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

## COLAs Online

Revised 01/23/04

***C1: What should I do if my labels are sent back for correction because the image dimensions I provided skewed or distorted the printable version of my application?***

When specialists at ALFD review applications, the product information as well as the label images you submitted are viewed within a printable version of the COLA form. When entering image dimensions, you must take into account any extra space saved within the label image that is not a part of the label itself or the printable COLA seen by specialists will generate a skewed version of the submitted labels.

For instance, if a label will be 3 by 4 inches when printed and attached to a bottle, but the label image file contains a one-inch border of blank white space, the dimensions entered into COLAs Online should be 4 by 5 inches. It is recommended that you crop out any space surrounding the label so there is no extra blank space within the saved label image. You can then enter in the exact dimensions of the printed label into COLAs Online.

***C2: Can I use a Macintosh computer to submit electronic label applications via COLAs Online?***

The current COLAs application supports MACs utilizing the Microsoft Internet Explorer (I.e.) web browser 5.0 or higher and Safari 1.0.

***C3. What do I do if my label images appear distorted or discolored?***

When developing your label for COLAs Online in a JPEG format for submission as an eApplication, it is recommended that the compression ratio be at 50% or medium, whichever your software application option is. This will ensure a clear image in the COLAs Online application. When saving a label in either Adobe Acrobat or Photo Shop, it is recommended that you review the compression methods addressed in the application help files. Adobe Acrobat users can find compression help by going into help, select index and then selecting compression method. Photo Shop users can find compression help by going into help, select index and then selecting compression. Other software packages should have similar compression help information and should be reviewed prior to saving a label.

***C4: What is a COLA?***

COLA stands for "Certificate of Label Approval." It is also used for "Certificate of Exemption Approval" and "Distinctive Liquor Bottle Approval."

***C5: What is COLAs Online?***

COLAs Online is the system used to electronically file Applications for and Certification/Exemption of Label/Bottle Approval (COLA) and track the status of electronic applications submitted for approval. COLAs Online stores all approved applications and serves as TTB's internal database, used to track all paper applications.

***C6: When will COLAS Online be available?***

COLAs Online is available now. Please visit FAQ C11 to register for use of the system.

***C7: What are the objectives of COLAS Online?***

The objectives of COLAs Online are to provide industry members a streamlined, more expedient and paperless means to obtain a COLA. The system will allow industry members to submit COLAs to the Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) via the Internet, provide a way for TTB to review the application electronically and return approved, returned for correction or rejected COLAs to industry members electronically. The system will also provide an on-line capability for industry members to obtain status updates on electronically filed forms and allow the public to view COLAs approved electronically, including the labels.

***C8: Am I required to file COLAS electronically?***

No; the filing of COLAs electronically is optional and we still accept paper label applications.

***C9: What are the advantages to filing COLAs electronically?***

- The eApplication is easier to complete.
- A decrease in the time it takes to obtain a COLA.
- The time to send an eApplication to TTB and the time for you to receive a response will be instantaneous.
- You will have fewer rejections for omissions of data or incorrect information because the system will not let you submit incomplete applications.
- You will have the ability to track the status of your eApplications while they are in the system.
- The system will be accessible 24 hours per day.
- If during the initial review of your eApplication problems are disclosed, rather than reject the application outright, you will be given the opportunity to make corrections within fifteen calendar days.

- Applications will not be rejected outright, and corrected eApplications that have been resubmitted will receive priority consideration over all applications received that day.

***C10: What programs will I need to install on my computer in order to use COLAs Online?***

COLAs Online is a web-based system and you will need to have access to the Internet. The system will support Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.0 and higher. You will need an e-mail address in order to receive status notification about your eApplications. You will also need access to a scanner to submit attachments including labels, unless you receive them in an electronic format from your designer or printer.

***C11: What is required to register for COLAs Online?***

To register for COLAs Online, you will be required to complete a registration form, ATF F 5013.2, COLAs Online Access Request, in order to receive a user ID and password to obtain access to TTB's COLAs Online System. If you do not have signature authority or power of attorney to sign required documents on behalf of the company for which you are filing label applications, you will also need to complete ATF F 5000.8, Power of Attorney. If you already have a power of attorney, you will need to submit a copy of it when you apply to register to use COLAs Online. Send the required documents to the, Tax and Trade Bureau, Advertising, Labeling and Formulation Division (ALFD), 650 Massachusetts Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20226.

***C12: Can I E-mail the COLAs Online Access form to your office?***

Sorry, no you may not. The ALFD office requires the form with original signatures to be mailed in.

***C13: Will I need to complete the ATF F 5000.8, Power of Attorney form to register for COLAs Online?***

If you do not have signature authority or power of attorney to sign required documents on behalf of the company for which you are filing label applications, you will need to complete the Power of Attorney form. If you already have a power of attorney, you will need to submit a copy when you apply to register to use COLAs Online. The power of attorney form can be found on our website at: <http://www.ttb.gov/alcohol/register.htm>.

***C14: What if I cannot download the COLAs Online registration form, ATF F 5013.2?***

We can e-mail the registration form to you as an attachment. When sent via e-mail the recipients have been able to open the registration form. Send an e-mail request to [alfd@ttb.gov](mailto:alfd@ttb.gov)

***C15: I submitted the form requesting enrollment in the COLAs Online label approval system. Will I receive an acknowledgement of receipt?***

When your COLAs Online Access Request form has been processed, you will receive an e-mail containing your User ID account. Due to security measures, your password will be conveyed separately to you by telephone.

***C16: Has our COLAs Online registration form been received or approved by ALFD?***

Contact ALFD Customer Service at (202) 927-8140, toll free (866) 927-ALFD (2533) or via e-mail at: [alfd@ttb.gov](mailto:alfd@ttb.gov).

***C17: What are the steps for filing a label application electronically?***

Listed below are some of the steps you will need to follow in order to file COLA applications electronically. Keep in mind that this project is a "work in progress" and some things could change as we improve upon the system.

- Access the TTB website at <http://www.colasonline.gov/>.
- Log onto COLAs Online by entering your username and password (assigned during registration).
- Choose malt beverage, wine or spirits COLA. All proceeding questions will be defined by your choice in this step e.g. you will not be asked to supply a vintage date if you choose malt beverage.
- Certain information will be pre-populated (name, address, permit number, phone numbers), based on the data you supplied during registration.
- Enter other information, either choosing from drop down boxes or filling in the item.
- Attach a file with a label image. These can be files of electronic images from your printing company or scanned images of the paper label. The system accepts JPEG and TIFF files.
- You will be asked to verify the completed eApplication prior to submission.
- You may either save the eApplication for up to 30 days or submit it immediately. Submission must be by a person with signing authority or Power of Attorney.
- Once you submit the eApplication, you will receive an E-mail verifying our receipt including the ATF ID number that was assigned to the application.
- Business rules will not allow submission if certain required information is omitted (e.g. brand name, net contents, no file attachment with labels).
- Once TTB takes action on your eApplication, the status will be changed and you will receive an e-mail that will inform you of the current status. "Needs

correction" and "rejected" COLAs will indicate the problems that must be addressed before the COLA can be approved.

- Approved COLAs will indicate the class and type code, origin code, and qualifications or expiration date. The system will allow you to print out electronically approved COLAs.

***C18: What type of label attachments will I be able to attach to the e-file COLA?***

You may only attach label images with the type/extensions of JPEG (.jpg, .jpeg, .jpe) and TIFF (.tif, .tiff). Each file may not exceed 450KB. In addition, each label (front, back, neck, etc.) must be uploaded as a separate file attachment; this file attachment should only contain the label image and should be cropped from other information such as a printer's masthead, etc. Also, please keep in mind that the file dimensions specified when uploading attachments pertain to the entire file and includes both the label, and any background that is not a part of the label itself. Accuracy of these dimensions is crucial in the rendering of the label images on the printable COLA version.

***C19: What do I do if my image attachments are not uploaded properly?***

Occasionally, due to glitches during the data transfer from your workstation to the TTB server, uploaded label image files become corrupted and distorted. When this occurs, please try to save the file again on your workstation and, afterwards, re-attempt the upload. If such problems persist, please then contact the Advertising, Labeling, & Formulation Division Customer Service desk at 1-866-927-ALFD (2533) or [alfd@ttb.gov](mailto:alfd@ttb.gov) for further assistance.

***C20: Can I periodically update my COLAs Online account as we acquire new permit numbers?***

Yes; you would complete the ATF F 5013.2, COLAs Online Access form and check the box "Modify User."

***C21: Will I be able to use third party filers to file label applications electronically?***

Yes; third party filers (trade associations, law firms, and industry representatives and consultants) will be able to submit label applications on your behalf. The third party filers will need to obtain a power of attorney from the companies that they represent. They will also need to register with TTB and receive a User ID and a password.

***C22: Will users be able to check the status of their eApplications?***

Yes; you may log on at any time and your home page will show a listing of all eApplications you filed in the last 30 days and their current status. The system will also allow you to search for all eApplications you have submitted and will identify the current status - received, approved, needs correction or rejected. You will not be able to see

this information for other company's submissions, or for your paper applications. E-mail notification of status changes in applications will be sent to the submitter. Therefore, if you use a third party filer to submit applications, they will receive the notification.

***C23: What is the difference between the status "needs correction" and "rejected"?***

The status "needs correction" means that the initial TTB review of your eApplication and label disclosed problems. Rather than rejecting the application outright, we will give you the opportunity to make the corrections within eight calendar days. If you do not make the corrections within the established time frame or do not make all the required corrections, the application will be rejected and you will have to resubmit. This procedure will only apply to e-filed applications. "Corrected" and resubmitted eApplications will receive priority consideration over electronic label applications received that day.

***C24: How do I submit additional information with my COLA application such as a formula or organic certifications?***

Any additional information submitted will need to be scanned into a file, saved, and uploaded using the "upload other attachments" option in Step 3 of the application process. Acceptable file types include: DOC (word document), TXT, PDF, JPEG and TIFF. You can attach up to 10 files; each file must be 450 KB or smaller.

***C25: Will TTB electronically notify the States and Customs of approved COLAs?***

No; this phase of COLAs Online will not interact with State or Customs systems. However, all approved COLAs and images of electronically filed labels are posted on the TTB website, available for viewing by anyone, including the States and Customs. There is a delay before posting the COLAs to the website. Users of COLAs Online and the public are able to print copies of electronically approved labels from the web page that can be submitted to States or to Customs. We are involving the States and Customs in further development of COLAs Online and encouraging their participation; however, the implementation of COLAs Online was not delayed to accommodate all state and Customs integrations.

***C26: If I am required to submit a paper copy of the COLA to a State or Customs, will the e-filed version have my signature and the signature of a TTB representative?***

The e-filed COLA contains the statement "Application was e-filed" in the applicant signature box. The applicant's name appears in the adjacent box, as it would on a paper COLA. A facsimile of the signature of the TTB approving official will appear on the approved COLA.

***C27: Will COLAs Online reduce the amount of time it takes to receive label approval?***

The human review process of the COLA application for compliance with the regulations will remain; however, eliminating the time it takes to send eApplications and return the COLA back to you through the U.S. Mail will shorten the process significantly. Also, the online application will have built-in validations to prevent many errors that are made by applicants on paper applications. Another process improvement will be the fact that in the new system, users will be able to "correct" a label application that will eliminate the need for most outright rejections, thus reducing the overall turnaround time for electronic COLA approvals.

***C28: Will I be able to file Formulas and Pre-Import approvals electronically?***

No; this phase of the new electronic system will only deal with COLAs. E-filing of formulas, Statements of Process, Pre-Import approvals and Lab Analysis will be handled in a future phase of the project.

***C29: Will COLAs Online improve the consistency of decisions made relating to label applications?***

Consistency of decisions made relating to label applications will only be addressed to a limited degree by a web-based system. COLAs Online will have business rules that will keep many incorrect or incomplete applications from reaching TTB. The "human element" will still be part of the label approval process due to the subjective nature of label regulations.

***C30: How will COLAs Online affect customer service?***

COLAs Online will not reduce your ability to interact with label specialists. The Customer Service Team will continue to handle your questions and concerns.

***C31: When does COLAs Online shutdown for routine maintenance?***

COLAs Online will shut down between 4:00 AM - 5:00 AM Eastern Time (ET) for routine maintenance.

***C32: What do I do if I am locked out of my COLAs Online User ID account?***

Please contact our technical support help desk at 877-254-4557 to have your User ID reset.

***C33: What do I do if I have forgotten my COLAs Online user password?***

Please contact our technical support help desk at 877-254-4557 to have your password reset.